



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT JANUARY 1 – MARCH 31, 2015

Countering Violent Extremism in the Middle East & North Africa (CoVE-MENA)

April 30, 2015

This report was prepared with funds provided by the United States Agency for International Development under Contract Number AID-OAA-TO-14-00048. It was prepared by FHI 360, Civil Society and Peacebuilding Department.

Submitted to:

April Hahn, CoVE-MENA Contracting Officer Representative (COR) USAID/ME/TS, ahahn@usaid.gov

Dara Katz, Peace & Security Advisor USAID/ME/TS, dkatz@usaid.gov

QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT NO. 2

JANUARY 1 – MARCH 31, 2015

Countering Violent Extremism in the Middle East & North Africa (CoVE-MENA) Task Order

CONTRACT NO. AID-OAA-TO-14-00048

DISCLAIMER

The author's views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government

CONTENTS

I.	Introduction.....	I
II.	CVE Context in MENA	I
III.	Task Order Management and Coordination	2
IV.	Task Order Activities.....	3
	Research Studies.....	3
	Training	4
	Pilot Activities.....	4
V.	Challenges Faced this Quarter.....	5
VI.	Plans for Next Quarter	5

Annex I: Women/VE Research Study Scope of Work

List of Acronyms & Abbreviations

CoP	Community of Practice
CoVE-MENA	Countering Violent Extremism in the Middle East and North Africa
CVE	Countering Violent Extremism
CSO	Civil Society Organization
Daesh	al-Dawla al-Islamiya fi al-Iraq wa al-Sham
FOG	Fixed Obligation Grant
GCTF	Global Counter Terrorism Forum
IS	Islamic State
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MSU	Monthly Status Update
Q2	Quarter Two
Q3	Quarter Three
RFA	Request for Application
SOW	Scope of Work
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USAID/ME/TS	USAID Middle East Bureau, Office of Technical Services
VE	Violent Extremism
VEOs	Violent Extremist Organizations
VE/I	Violent Extremism and Insurgency (USAID Policy Steering Committee)

I. Introduction

This second Quarterly Performance Report for the Countering Violent Extremism in the Middle East and North Africa (CoVE-MENA) Task Order covers the period 1 January to 31 March 2015 (known hereafter as Q2 in this report). Highlights from the reporting period include:

- USAID convened a quarterly review meeting with CoVE-MENA on February 24th. Recommendations made to improve communication between USAID and CoVE-MENA were discussed and taken up following the meeting. Next steps for determining the workshop dates, location, and agenda were discussed, as well as next steps for deciding on the Women and VE, and Governance and VE research studies.
- The CoVE-MENA team worked with USAID to continue the development of the agenda and preparations for the CVE Training Workshop. The date and location for the workshop (June 8 – 11, 2015, in Nicosia, Cyprus) were decided at the end of Q2, and conference approval is anticipated to occur at the beginning of Q3.
- The CoVE-MENA team and USAID drafted, commented, and redrafted the Women and VE research study Scope of Work (SoW); by the end of March, a close to final SoW for the study had been developed. Through conversations with USAID, the proposed Governance and VE research study evolved into a study on community resilience to VEOs in Iraq.
- In February, CoVE-MENA Team members participated in events organized around the White House CVE Summit, and the GCTF meetings the following week.
- VE desk research reports were prepared on Mali, Morocco, and Niger in advance of the launch of the Maghreb/Sahel pilot activity. These are open-source, living documents meant to be updated and used by the CoVE-MENA team.

II. Context in MENA

The threat of violent extremism remains high in the MENA region in general; it ranges from a moderate risk in some areas, to continued territorial control in Iraq and Syria (and increasingly Libya) by the extremist group calling themselves the Islamic State (IS), and known in the Western media mostly as ISIS or ISIL.

As discussed in the QPR for Q1, the CoVE-MENA team takes seriously the start of a Muslim-led discourse (highlighted at the Hedayah conference in December 2014) to take back Islamic vocabulary and sacred concepts, including the words *jihad*, *hijrah*, *sharia*, and *Caliphate*.

As such, CoVE-MENA has also adopted the increasingly common term Daesh (or Da'esh) to refer to the so-called Islamic State. Daesh is an acronym for the Arabic name for the group, *al-Dawla al-Islamiya fi al-Iraq wa al-Sham*, and also a somewhat derogatory term. The group has publicly denounced its use – therefore many people in MENA critical of the group's attempts to coopt Islamic ideals use the name in protest. See for example this op-ed article on the subject: <http://www.bostonglobe.com/opinion/2014/10/09/words-matter-isis-war-use-daesh/V85GYEuasEEjgrUun0dMUP/story.html>.

This quarter also witnessed developments in the US and international response to violent extremism, and increased attention to CVE efforts. The recent White House CVE Summit has resulted in increased interest in CVE programming, and USAID and State hope to build on this momentum to implement effective CVE programming. It is expected that specific steps taken by USAID and State will be presented at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) meeting in September 2015, and USAID has proposed that CoVE-MENA develop a networking and capacity building event for participants from the Maghreb-Sahel in advance of UNGA. Further details and logistics will be a primary focus of the CoVE-MENA team in Q3.

Monthly Status Updates (MSUs) in Q2 included sections on “CVE Context & Dynamics in MENA” with a special country focus each month. January’s MSU focused on Lebanon, February’s MSU focused on Morocco, and March’s MSU focused on Mali. In addition, CoVE-MENA produced open-source desk research reports on VE in Morocco, Niger, and Mali this quarter, including unclassified USAID reports and other open-source materials in their bibliographies, in order to allow the reports to be shared and amended freely by all members of the CoVE-MENA team. These reports, which are meant to inform CoVE-MENA’s anticipated Maghreb/Sahel pilot activity, examine the VE trends in the countries, the VEOs present in the countries, the VE push and pull factors, and the response to the VE problem. In addition, the papers propose target populations, programming approaches, and potential CSO implementers for CVE programming. These are living reports that will be periodically updated with new information. The primary audience for these papers is the CoVE-MENA Task Order team, and they are meant only as background to inform pilot activity design and implementation.

III. Task Order Management and Coordination

Personnel: During the reporting period, CoVE-MENA posted a job ad for a Grants and Program Specialist to support the anticipated Maghreb/Sahel pilot from Rabat. Approximately 85 applications were received; three initial candidates were interviewed and tested (on their writing skills, and skills in evaluating grant proposals). One candidate was selected but declined due to another offer; the remaining candidates were deemed unsatisfactory, and a second round of interviews commenced. The team has decided that, based on possible upcoming changes to the pilots structure, we will delay hiring a Grants and Program Specialist for the time being, until we are clear on the location of activities and the required skillset. CoVE-MENA continues to review applications and CVs into Q3, so that we are positioned to hire the right person if they become available.

Contractual Issues: CoVE-MENA did not raise any contractual issues with USAID this quarter. One pending issue is the determination of Grants Under Contract (GUC) authority for the Task Order.

Coordination with USAID: CoVE-MENA made a change to its coordination with USAID during a quarterly review meeting convened on February 24, 2015. It was decided that more communication would occur via phone meetings and emails specific to the various aspects of CoVE-MENA (research, training, and pilots) and that coordination meetings would be on an as-needed basis until further notice. The next quarterly review meeting should occur in Q3.

Coordination with other agencies: Representatives from CoVE-MENA attended the forum on “The Roles of Women and Youth in Preventing Violent Extremism” at the US Institute of Peace on March 6th. They also participated in side events on women and youth after the White House CVE Summit, sponsored by USIP and the Global Center for Cooperative Security. During these events, contacts were made that could prove useful for the upcoming research on women and violent extremism and the Maghreb/Sahel pilot activity. Field Program Representative Adnane Raiss participated as a representative of the Government of Morocco’s Ministry of Religious Endowments and Islamic Affairs to the GCTF meetings on foreign terrorist fighters; he did not represent CoVE-MENA in this role, but he was able to combine the visit to DC with several meetings at FHI 360 and in the DC-based CVE community.

IV. Task Order Activities

Research Studies

During Q2, the CoVE-MENA Task Order team made progress in finalizing the design and preparing to launch the first research study for this year on the topic of Women and Violent Extremism (VE). Through consultations with USAID, the team revised and refined the scope of work for a proposed research study focused on Iraq. As a result of the consultations with USAID experts, the research study, which will be initiated in Q3, will focus on the topic of community resilience to VEOs in the context of Iraq.

During the month of January, Mercy Corps undertook some preliminary research, meeting and talking with experts in women’s issues and conflict, including Michelle Barsa from the Institute for Inclusive Security, Dr. David Alpher from SaferWorld, and Dr. Laura Sjoberg from the University of Florida to identify knowledge gaps around the roles of women in VE and CVE. At the end of January, CoVE-MENA submitted to USAID/ME/TS a concept note for this study. However, after receiving the initial concept note, USAID proposed to provide CoVE-MENA with a SoW based on consultations with Global Center and USIP, and in consideration of findings from other reports. On March 24th, FHI 360 received the SoW for the Women and VE research study from USAID, specifying the research questions, timeline, and methodology to be used in this study, with the agreement to meet in early April with USAID to finalize the SoW and research plan. In March, CoVE-MENA also identified Dr. Sjoberg as the Principal Investigator for the Women and VE study.

FHI 360 submitted to USAID on January 26th a concept note proposing to use Mercy Corps’ existing survey data to assess the links between governance and VE in Iraq. However, further consultations with USAID led to a change in the direction of this study. It was agreed in March that the focus of the second research study would be on community resilience to VEOs and foreign fighters in Iraq, rather than governance and violent extremism. After additional conversations with Chris Jennings from USAID’s Middle East Bureau, and with additional input from Dr. Gavin Helf of USAID’s Asia Bureau, Mercy Corps has been tasked with developing a research proposal on this new topic in April, to send to USAID’s for review and further discussion.

A summary of what has been achieved this reporting period is listed below:

- Receipt of SOW for Women and VE Study
- Discussions to narrow the scope of second research study focused on Iraq
- Preliminary discussions with experts on Women's role in VE
- List of resources and existing research on Women and VE compiled
- Principal Investigator for Women and VE study identified and in the process of onboarding

Training and Knowledge Generation

Throughout Q2, the CoVE-MENA team made significant progress on the development of an agenda for the USAID workshop. Drafts were submitted to USAID in each month, and phone calls were held with USAID staff, SSG Advisors, and FHI 360 on February 24th and March 5th, 11th, and 18th.

The CoVE-MENA team submitted a detailed site and cost comparison on March 4th along with a recommendation that the CVE Workshop take place in Cyprus. USAID/ME/TS received Bureau-level approval to hold the workshop in Cyprus. In early Q3, CoVE-MENA will continue to explore venue and hotel options in Cyprus for the dates of June 8th – June 11th, so that the venue can be booked as soon as USAID conference approval is finalized and costs can be incurred.

The CoVE-MENA Project Manager in coordination with SSG Advisors Facilitators has produced several iterations of the workshop agenda. The CoVE-MENA Team has been in regular contact with USAID regarding changing and adapting the agenda. Coordination and further drafts will be ongoing into Q3 (April/May 2015).

Pilot Activities

The Maghreb/Sahel pilot activity was on hold this quarter, pending USAID consultations, but the CoVE-MENA team was able to make progress in preparing and planning for the pilot so that it can be launched quickly upon notification from USAID.

The CoVE-MENA team made progress in the interviewing, testing, and selection of a Grants and Programs Officer. An offer was made but not accepted, due to the candidate accepting another position; a decision on the position will be made by CoVE-MENA in Q3 pending decisions on changes to the structure of the pilot activities by USAID. At the end of March, FHI 360 also received a new award from USAID/Morocco for the Career Development Activity which will allow for FHI 360 to proceed with the registration process in Morocco.

To pave the way for the launch of the pilot activity, in March, USAID held several bilateral calls with missions in the Maghreb and Sahel, including Algeria, Tunisia, Mali and Niger; CoVE-MENA was able to participate in the Algeria and Niger calls. Open source desk research on VE dynamics and CVE programming and potential CSO grantees was started by CoVE-MENA for Mali, Morocco, and Niger (as discussed in the "Context in MENA" section of this report).

The CoVE-MENA team also completed draft Requests for Applications (RFAs) and grant templates that can be easily finalized and launched quickly once the pilot is launched.

Following discussions with USAID on how CoVE-MENA could capitalize on opportunities presented by the process for regional and international CVE action initiated in the White House Summit on CVE, it was decided that CoVE-MENA's first activity within the Maghreb-Sahel pilot would be one of the regional events planned as a follow-on to the CVE Summit. Accordingly, in Q3, CoVE-MENA will work with USAID to determine the scope and timing of the initial regional event, and the pilot as a whole. It is now anticipated that the pilot activity will launch in Q4.

V. Challenges Faced this Quarter

Substantial progress was made this quarter on both the training and research components but there continued to be delays in launching the Maghreb-Sahel pilot activity. These delays were related in part to CoVE-MENA's need to be responsive to the White House CVE Summit and subsequent action plan, as well as ongoing USG discussions and consultations about how the pilot's design could best support and respond to USG commitments from the CVE summit, and also best complement existing USG CVE efforts in the region.

USAID has been designated the USG lead on the "women and youth" CVE workstream, and CoVE-MENA is considering ways to more explicitly fill that role. One example is the addition of a "women and youth" panel at the upcoming USAID training workshop in Cyprus; we anticipate that the pilot activities will likely also be reoriented to more explicitly address the roles of women and youth.

VI. Plans for Next Quarter

Management & Coordination

As stated above, due to timing and coverage challenges, the regular weekly (or biweekly) USAID-CoVE-MENA coordination meetings started in Q1 did not continue throughout Q2. The last general coordination meeting with USAID was held on February 24, 2015, where it was decided that quarterly in-person meetings would be held, with more as needed. CoVE-MENA hopes to continue a regular schedule for general coordination meetings with USAID in Q3, recognizing that USAID's time is limited, and email and phone correspondence may have to take precedence.

Because progress is being made on all three aspects of CoVE-MENA (training, research, and pilots), and the USAID Points of Contact for these components have shifted, CoVE-MENA and USAID have adopted an approach to hold separate, targeted meetings (mostly by teleconference) when necessary for each topic, rather than one general standing meeting attempting to cover all aspects. Because this approach has worked well, CoVE-MENA recommends retaining this procedure in Q3.

Research Studies

The following activities are planned for Q3:

- Contract agreement with Principal Investigator finalized
- Work plan for Women and VE study completed and approved by USAID
- Analysis for Women and VE study underway, including interviews with key informants and experts and media analysis
- Intermediate deliverables for Women and VE study (detailed outline, abbreviated literature review and summary of key findings) provided to USAID for feedback
- Concept note and research plan for Iraq Community Resilience to VEOs and foreign fighters study finalized
- Principal Investigator Iraq study identified
- Detailed work plan for Iraq study shared with USAID

Training and Knowledge Generation

The CVE training will be held June 8th – June 11th in Cyprus, so the next quarter will be busy for the Training component of CoVE-MENA. USAID will be reaching out to the Missions to inform them of the Workshop and invite participants. The CoVE-MENA team, in collaboration with USAID, will be finalizing the workshop agenda and presentations, as well as finalizing logistics leading up to June 8th. A post-training report will be available at the end of Q3.

Pilot Activities

CoVE-MENA anticipates that Q3 (April- June 2015) will see significant developments related to the first CoVE-MENA pilot activity for the Maghreb/Sahel. Decisions are expected on the first regional event early in the quarter and the CoVE-MENA will rapidly launch planning and preparations as soon the theme for the first event is decided. CoVE-MENA has already begun to identify possible CSO participants for a Maghreb-Sahel training or networking events.

Annexes

Annex I: Women/VE Research Study Scope of Work